

School Committee Meeting Minutes
Town Offices
March 29, 2004

Present: Donald Parker, Chairperson
Paul Wilson
Gary Bourassa
Hugh Muffoletto
Bob Prescott

Also Present: Dr. Thomas Scott, Superintendent
Patricia Stern, Business Manager
Tom Walsh, SPED director
Lonnie Ouellette, Early Learning Director
Sylvia Jordan, Middle School Principal

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

As there was no public participation the meeting moved on to discuss old business.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of March 9, 2004. Prior to approval, the committee questioned whether Mrs. Jordan had informed parents of the circumstances surrounding Mr. Pedreschi's hiring. Mrs. Jordan stated that a letter was sent home to parents in the March 4 newsletter. Motion to approve the minutes was seconded and approved.

Payables Warrants 440 and 442 were reviewed. Payroll Warrants 835, 335, 863, 337 and 837 were also reviewed.

The committee decided to wait on budget issues until all other items on the agenda had been discussed.

Mr. Muffoletto announced that the DEAC will be holding a meeting on March 31 to discuss four different modes of operating a school district: traditional, regional, charter and continuing tuition students. This meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at the Mass Development office on Buena Vista Road. Mr. Muffoletto stated that it will be essentially an informational meeting. He also stated that a subcommittee has done a lot of work in gathering data. An amazing survey was sent out that garnered a great amount of feedback. The survey ascertained that the people of Devens are very much in favor of wanting education and that they would increase their taxes at least 10-15% if necessary to achieve that goal. Mr. Deguglielmo stated that approximately 30% of the respondents did not have children. He also stated that the DEAC hopes to know what mode of

schooling Devens will utilize by May. He is also hoping for 40-50 people to attend the meeting which should represent half of the Devens population.

Mr. Wilson stated that he would not be able to attend as he had not received enough notice. Mr. Muffoletto is hoping for SPACO to record the meeting, allowing Devens and Shirley residents to view what has been transpiring. Mr. Muffoletto and Dr. Scott will both attend the meeting.

Lonnie Ouellette presented her documentation on the potential impact of closing Devens. The biggest impact would be the loss of funding Shirley would receive from the Department of Education. We currently receive \$84,000 in community partnership grants and \$61,000 in kindergarten grant money. The latter pays for half of the assistants in the kindergarten program. Mrs. Ouellette also stated that the process to obtain accreditation for the preschool, pre-k and kindergarten programs from NAEYC could possibly be in jeopardy. The process, which began over a year ago, takes 9-18 months to pursue and was started with the programs continuing to exist as they currently are. Should any changes be made to how the program operates the process may need to be started again. Mrs. Ouellette also noted that the Center and Devens school programs are very critical to the continued growth and improvement of the Shirley schools.

Mr. Wilson explained that no one has said anything about cutting the programs – only possible building changes. Dr. Scott also noted that the preschool and kindergarten programs are the gem of the Shirley school system – probably the best in the state. The program works in its current location and would be very hard to match should changes need to be made.

The next informational piece on the agenda was the grant/donation summary. Following is a brief review:

- Grant 391 Community Partnership Grant: \$83,000 in FY04 – we should expect to receive that amount and possible more
- Grant 701 Kindergarten Enhancement: \$61,000 in FY04 – should expect the same
- DPH Enhanced School Health: \$47,000 in FY04 – will not receive this as it was taken out of governor's budget – not included in FY05 budget
- Mass Cultural Council: \$12,000 in FY04 – not included in next year's budget
- ATO Score Grant: \$5,000 in FY04 – not included in next year's budget
- Grant 140 Teacher Quality: \$24,000 in FY04 – should expect similar amount
- Grant 160 Enhanced ED through Technology: \$1,700 in FY04 – similar amount
- Grant 240 SPED: \$171,000 in FY04 – should expect the same and possible more
- Grant 262 SPED Early Childhood Allocation: \$15,000 in FY04 – level funded; portion goes to Mrs. Ouellette's program
- Grant 274 SPED Curriculum Frameworks: \$6,000 in FY04– not expected to receive next year
- Grant 302 Title VII: \$2,900 in FY04 – will probably receive
- Grant 305 Title I: \$70,000 in FY04 – budgeted for \$69,000 realizing that it may actually be less
- Grant 310 McKinney Homeless: \$15,000 in FY04 – anticipating same amount

Grant 331 Drug Free Schools: \$2,900 in FY04 - should receive
Grant 502 Circuit Breaker Program: \$96,000 in FY04 – should get more – we are expecting 35% reimbursement
Medicaid: \$18,000 in FY04 – hoping to receive \$60,000
Bemis donations: \$14,000 in FY04 –hoping to receive the same
Marjorie Houston: \$85,000 in FY04 from her estate – money won't be available

The typical timeframe for grant notification in FY04 was from July 25 through August 13, 2003, well after the override was placed on the ballot. If we go for an override again this year, we can include a stipulation that we repay any override money if we receive any additional funding. This stipulation may help soften attitudes associated with the schools and overrides.

Dr. Scott informed the committee that the cost of a 1% teacher salary increase would be \$28,262.22.

A copy of the Harvard bus fee schedule was included for review. Harvard has been charging bus fees for 2 years at \$200 per child, \$600 family maximum. Leominster also charges families \$100 per child, \$175 family maximum for grades 7-12. It was asked if low income families pay these fees. Dr. Scott stated that financial situations are probably taken into consideration.

Several *Globe* articles were included on the agenda. One article was about the town of Burlington taking over SPED tuition costs. North Andover is now doing the same. It is possible to break down these costs on our town warrant. Mr. Prescott asked what benefits would we have by breaking these items down for residents to review. They may decide to vote it down anyway.

Mr. Parker applauded the school administrators for presenting a needs based budget for review. The committee is faced with very hard decisions to make. They would like to preserve everything in the needs based budget as it is truly important for the school community. However, the town has not voted favorable for overrides for the school district in the past. The committee does not want to cut anything. They need to develop priorities as there may come a time when the committee can not make any more cuts and needs to go to the town to ask for an override.

Mr. Parker stated that we need to present to the town that the schools are terribly important and that we need to ask for help from the town. Mr. Muffoletto stated that we may need another public information meeting where we can get a larger cross-section of the community. Perhaps comments from the audience would come from residents only, unlike teachers and other employees who addressed the committee at the Public Hearing. Another suggestion was to place an information sheet in *The Shirley Volunteer* as it may be more effective way to reach the townspeople. We also need to find out what is important to the people of Shirley about their schools.

The level funded budget presented to the committee has not changed since it was first presented. The budget needs to be reviewed line by line with the administrative team. The committee agreed to take a closer look at the line items at the April 13 meeting.

Mr. Parker motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:35. Mr. Prescott seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned.

The committee met with the Finance Committee.

Respectfully submitted by:
Karen Gutheil